

LUIS DE JESUS LOS ANGELES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

JUNE EDMONDS

Meditations on African Resilience

February 24 – April 13, 2024



Opening Reception: Saturday, February 24, 4–7 p.m.
FRIEZE Weekend Brunch: March 2, 2024, 9 a.m.–12 p.m.

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O living fountain that I crave, in bread of life I see her flame, in black of night. – from Benin Olukun chant

Luis De Jesus Los Angeles is very pleased to present **June Edmonds: *Meditations on African Resilience***, the artist's third solo exhibition with the gallery, on view in Gallery 1 from February 24 through April 13, 2024. An opening reception will be held on Saturday, February 24th, from 4 to 7 p.m., and a FRIEZE Weekend Brunch will be held the following Saturday, March 2nd, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. The artist will be present at both events.

For over 35 years, June Edmonds has cultivated a practice that synthesizes abstraction, spirituality, and meditation with her ruminations and contemplations on her African American roots, Black history, and experience in America. Her paintings memorialize historic and contemporary figures and events with narratives that embody Black strength, endurance, joy, harmony, power, and resilience. Exploring the depth and breadth of color, Edmonds' paintings communicate a language uniquely her own, deconstructing symbols through repetitive linework and bands of color, visceral impasto textures, and a psychologically charged lexicon of brilliant color.

Continuing her research-based explorations which previously have drawn from various cultural and art historical references to sacred geometries (such as the *vesica piscis* and the *Adinkra* symbols of West Africa) and led to the development of her celebrated Energy Circles series, Edmonds new paintings find inspiration in the emblem of the river leaf (*ebe-amēn*) — an ancient and sacred quatrefoil used prominently in the Kingdom of Benin (also known as the Edo Kingdom or the Benin Empire), a pre-colonial kingdom in what is now southwestern Nigeria — to symbolize the power and regality of kings, healers, and deities, and as a spiritual symbol for unity, balance, and protection.

Edmonds was drawn to this symbol during her studies of the 15th and 16th century Benin bronze plaques, where she noted the recurring motif alongside relief figures illustrating stories of the Oba (king) and his royal court and the achievements of the Benin warriors and dynasties. These plaques served to record important historical events, good or bad, as well as instruct, unify, and establish the magnificence of the Benin Empire. The word for “to remember” (*saeyama*) in Edo, the language of Benin, translates as “to cast a motif in bronze.”

Edmonds inspiration compelled her to adopt and *adapt* this symbol as a way to restore and reclaim its power in the present, and use it as a tool for resilience to its contemporary heirs, not just ancient African nobility. Edmonds notes, “I am using this inspired symbol to do the same, but the power and resilience is ours. It belongs to all of us. It always was ours. All we must do is learn and remember the greatness of our history.

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This body of work can be seen as a constellation that guides us to the freedom that can come from these meditations.”

June Edmonds: *Meditations on African Resilience* presents a series of contemplations on the river leaf symbol, combined at times with the *vesica piscis*, in fields of color pulsing with subtle energy: circles within circles, overlapping depths of hue and intensity, and their echoing intersections, to induce an expansive range of chromatic awareness — what she calls “deep color” — exploring the deepest potentialities and experiences of color. Edmonds shares, “I believe that the deep color palette I’m continuing to delve into carries a profound and resonant quality, tapping into a part of our psyche linked to an ancient memory that exists within all of us.”

June Edmonds (b. 1959, Los Angeles, CA) received her MFA from Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, and a bachelor’s degree from San Diego State University. She also attended Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Edmonds was recently awarded the 2023 MacDowell Spring-Summer Fellowship, Peterborough, NH; and the Ucross Foundation Spring Fellowship, Clearmont, Wyoming, among other prestigious awards, including the Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship in Fine Arts (2022), New York, NY; and the California Community Foundation Fellowship for Visual Art Fellows (2022), Los Angeles, CA. Edmonds has exhibited at The Getty Villa, Malibu, CA; Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA; Mead Art Museum, Amhurst, MA; Davis Museum of Art, Wellesley College, MA; Laband Art Gallery, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA; California African American Museum, Los Angeles; Luckman Fine Art Gallery at Cal State Los Angeles; Watts Tower Art Center, Los Angeles, CA; Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery; Angels Gate Art Center, San Pedro, CA; Manhattan Beach Art Center, Manhattan Beach, CA; and Marche de l’art at the Dakar Biennial, Dakar, Senegal. Edmonds has also completed several works of public art with the city of Los Angeles and the Department of Cultural Affairs, including an installation at the MTA Pacific Station in Long Beach, CA.

Edmonds paintings are held in notable collections throughout the United States including the Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA; California African American Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Mead Art Museum, Amhurst College, Amhurst, MA; Davis Museum, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA; David Owsley Museum of Art at Ball State University, Muncie, IN; Kleefeld Contemporary Art Museum, California State University, Long Beach, CA; Embassy of Guatemala, U.S. Department of State; The Shah Garg Collection, New York, NY; Pamela J. Joyner and Alfred J. Giuffrida Collection, San Francisco, CA; The Pizzuti Collection, Columbus, OH; Jorge M. Pérez Collection, Miami, FL; Petrucci Family Foundation Collection of African-American Art, Asbury, NJ; Arthur Lewis Collection, Los Angeles, CA; Rodney M. Miller Collection, New York, NY; Michael Rubel Collection, Los Angeles, CA; David Rogath Collection, Greenwich, CT; and Kelly Williams and Andrew Forsyth Collection, Palm Beach, FL; among others.

For further information, including images and previews, please call 213-395-0762, or email: galler@luisdejesus.com.

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